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Rooftop components

1. East stair access
2. Stone waterfall
3. Waterfall seating area
4. Austrian pine trees and artificial grass
5. Dining area; additional seating
6. Creek fed by waterfall
7. Fence built with both privacy and views in mind
8. Upper ledge seating, accessed by a gateway to guest parking
9. Access to private side patio
10. Smokehouse/barbeque area



A-FRAME NO MORE - You wouldn't know it from this photo, but this retreat was an A-frame before a devastating fire burned it to the foundation. Instead of restoring the A-frame, the owners rebuilt the cabin as a bungalow with a rooftop garden.

AN OVER-THE-TOP PROJECT

Rooftop Oasis

A NEVADA RETREAT "RE-COVERS" AFTER IT'S RAVAGED BY FIRE

BY EMILY HARE

As far as cabin renovation projects go, this one is over the top - literally.

In 2001, Garry and Angie Tomashowski bought a large A-frame cabin in the Las Vegas suburb of Mount Charleston, Nev., a tiny, unincorporated town nestled in a valley of its namesake peak. The husband-and-wife real estate team purchased the cabin as an investment property, so they worked on transforming the four-level retreat into a weekend rental. The renovation was nearly complete in 2009 when an electrical fire burned almost everything, leaving only a water-damaged foundation.

In addition to being a realtor, Garry has 30 years of experience as a craftsman. So, Garry looked at the unfortunate turn of events as an opportunity. One of the things he enjoys most about his work is redesigning spaces and fixing design flaws to create a better flow.



A CREEK RUNS THROUGH IT – A custom creek bed spans the length of the roof, and solid-cedar pathways in an origami pattern meander around artificial grass carpet and Austrian pine trees.

Rather than incurring the expense of restoring the original towering A-frame, Garry and Angie decided to salvage what they could of the remaining structure. Recognizing the recent trend in smaller, more efficient second-home design, and bearing his clients' requests for outdoor living spaces and privacy, Garry opted to transform the cabin into a bungalow,

of patio space on the property, including the rooftop deck, a barbeque/dining space and various hidden relaxation spots among the tall ponderosa and pinyon pine trees.

ALL IN THE DETAILS

Garry designed and built the rooftop deck himself, only recruiting help from outside vendors when necessary. To ensure that the

pathways in an origami-type approach, interspersed with an artificial grass carpet and Austrian pine trees. The property now has six different levels of seating areas to optimize orientation, including a ledge with a bench that can only be accessed through a gate from the guest parking area. There is also a semi-private side balcony that can accommodate a small café-style table and chairs. Farther down, due west of the cabin, is a patio with a brick barbeque and a smokehouse. The rooftop may be accessed by stairways on either side of the cabin.

The deck's most stunning feature, though, is a waterfall-creek combo that spans the length of the roof. Water trickles over a stack of large, slate slabs (each weighing 200–300 pounds) set against a retaining wall of man-made western sandstone. The water flows into a custom creek bed and continues through pipes under the deck boards until it reaches the other end of the roof. From there, it makes its way back under the deck to a holding pond on the west side of the roof, where it

By the #s

- 1,500 sq. ft. deck
- 2,000 sq. ft. total for outdoor living
- 7,500 feet elevation
- 778 sq. ft. cabin beneath deck

On the inside, the remodeled cabin is only 778 square feet. But there is a total of approximately 2,000 square feet of patio space.

adding an open-air rooftop deck where the A-frame's living room floor used to be.

The vision: a romantic cabin for two, perfect for a couple who enjoys getting outdoors and connecting with nature more than having extra bedrooms or spacious living quarters. On the inside, the remodeled cabin is only 778 square feet. But there is a total of approximately 2,000 square feet

deck would support the heavy snow loads common during Mount Charleston winters, Garry turned to Chris Cowles, a civil engineer from Culp & Tanner, Inc. At his recommendation, Garry built the deck on a series of I-beams spaced only 8 inches apart on center.

The rooftop deck is a 1,500-square-foot oasis that includes angular, solid-cedar



STONE WATERFALL – This seating area is centered on a waterfall made of stacked slate. And resting on the waterfall ledges are round stones engraved with "Live, Love, Hope, Laugh, Dream."

is pumped up to the waterfall to complete the cycle again.

To comply with building codes, Garry had to build the roof with a slight pitch ($\frac{1}{4}$ inch per foot) to account for runoff. The creek takes advantage of this slope, running naturally from one end of the deck to the other. Although the roof is actually about 3 feet higher at the waterfall than it is at the end of the creek, the slope is gradual enough not to be detected by the casual observer.

PRIVACY, WITH A VIEW

Because the cabin is nestled tightly on a quarter-acre lot that's adjacent to other homes on the hillside, Garry knew that achieving some level of privacy on the rooftop was a priority. So he installed a cedar fence around the perimeter, as high as Nevada building codes would allow. To maintain a view of the pines to the north, Garry tapered the height of the fence boards toward the end that faces the trees.

"Not only do you have your pine trees and little nestling of foliage inside of this

area, but you're looking at the large pine trees and mountainous views around you," says Garry. "It creates that uplifting feeling of soaring and openness."

Mount Charleston is nearly surrounded by the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest, a green haven in the midst of the southern Nevada desert. So when rooftop sunbathers start to get restless, they can make their way to one of the many hiking trails just a few steps away.

NO REGRETS

Due to a use of high-quality materials in the project, Garry admits that the rooftop addition probably wasn't much more economical than restoring the original home design. "Ultimately, [we] probably could have put a cheap A-frame on top ... but those are a dime a dozen up here," says Garry. "We wanted to create a high-quality smaller space that lived larger outside and smaller inside."

Indeed, the well-designed rooftop oasis is a pleasant break from the ordinary. When sitting on the roof of this cabin, it's hard not



WATER FEATURE – Water flows through a cedar birdhouse and into a pond before it recirculates.

to get lost in a summer reverie while listening to the gentle flow of the creek and gazing upon green forest and blue skies. ■

Editorial Assistant Emily Hare is so fond of mountain cabins that she and her husband are renting one in the Smoky Mountains for a vacation later this year.

RESOURCES

- Culp & Tanner Structural Engineers, www.culpandtanner.com
- Mt. Charleston Realty, www.mtcharlestonrealty.com

MORE ONLINE

- Subscribers, to see photos of the bungalow's updated interior, go to www.CabinLife.com/renovation.
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